

to your

# Health!

*"Promoting Good Health Through Information"*

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Winter 2003

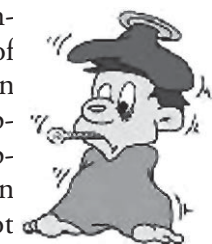
## Antibiotics Overused

*Jeffrey Hansen, RPh, BCPS*

Are you experiencing a runny nose, cough, and other symptoms of the common cold? In a recent study, 50% of adults and 33% of parents of children with cold symptoms wanted a prescription for antibiotics to manage the symptoms. However, only 43% of people in the study were aware that viruses, not bacteria, cause colds. Antibiotics are ineffective against the viruses that cause colds or the flu. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 33% of the 150 million annual outpatient prescriptions written for antibiotics are unnecessary.

Yellow or green nasal secretions or sputum may potentially indicate to a provider that an antibiotic may be needed. However, it is very difficult to tell the difference between bacterial and viral infections because even viruses can cause yellow or green nasal secretions or sputum. The best thing to do is to see your primary care provider if you have a very high temperature, difficulty breathing, chest pain, or if symptoms of infection continue for longer than seven days.

There are two main concerns with antibiotics being overused. One, the more frequently you take antibiotics, the more likely you are to develop allergic reactions to them. Two, the more bacteria are exposed to antibiotics, the more likely they are to become resistant to them. For example, *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria are the most common cause of sinus infections and pneumonia. Overuse of the antibiotic, penicillin, has resulted in penicillin-resistant *Streptococcus* infections. In parts of Russia and China, greater



*(continued on page 2)*

## Recipe for Health Winter Crisp

*Only 1 tablespoon of margarine is used to make the crumb topping of this tart and tangy fruit dessert that is cholesterol free and low sodium.*

| Filling                      | Topping                   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1/2 C sugar                  | 2/3 C rolled oats         |
| 3 Tbsp all-purpose flour     | 1/3 C brown sugar, packed |
| 1 tsp lemon peel, grated     | 1/4 C whole wheat flour   |
| 3/4 tsp lemon juice          | 2 tsp ground cinnamon     |
| 1 C cranberries              | 1 Tbsp soft margarine,    |
| 5 C apples, unpeeled, sliced | melted                    |

1. To prepare filling, in a medium bowl combine sugar, flour, and lemon peel; mix well. Add lemon juice, apples, and cranberries; stir to mix. Spoon into a 6-cup baking dish.
2. To prepare topping, in a small bowl, combine oats, brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon. Add melted margarine; stir to mix.
3. Sprinkle topping over filling. Bake in a 375° F oven for approximately 40-50 minutes or until filling is bubbly and top is brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

*Yield: 6 servings Serving Size: 1-3/4 inch by 2 inch piece*

*Each serving provides: 284 calories; 6 g total fat; 1 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 56 mg sodium*

*From [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Having Trouble Sleeping? .....         | 2 |
| Healthy Aging .....                    | 2 |
| Glaucoma "Eye-Q" Test .....            | 2 |
| Glaucoma and Its Treatments .....      | 3 |
| Patient Education Website .....        | 3 |
| Answers to Glaucoma "Eye-Q" Test ..... | 4 |
| Hepatitis C Support Group .....        | 4 |

# Having trouble sleeping?

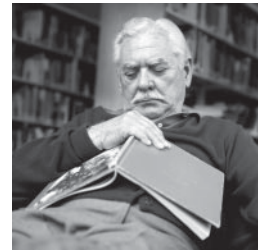
Here are some tips from Dr. Perrin French to help you get a better night's sleep...

*To maintain a regular sleep cycle:*

- Avoid naps, except for a brief 10-15 minute nap 8 hours after arising; but check with your physician first because in some sleep disorders, naps may be very beneficial.
- Restrict sleep period to average number of hours you've actually slept per night in the preceding week. Quality of sleep is important. Too much time in bed can decrease the quality of sleep on subsequent night.
- Exercise regularly, preferably 40 minutes per day of an activity that causes sweating. It is best to exercise early in the day or at least six hours before bedtime.
- A hot bath within two hours before bedtime or a hot drink may help you relax and warm you up.
- Wake up at a regular time 7 days a week.
- Avoid bright light if you have to get up at night.
- Get at least a half hour of sunlight within 30 minutes of waking up.

*To prepare yourself for bed:*

- Make arrangements for night care-giving activities (children, others, pets) to be assumed by someone else.
- A bedtime ritual such as reading before lights out may be helpful if not occupationally-related or arousing.
- List problems and one-sentence next steps for the following day. Set aside a worry time.
- Learn simple self-hypnosis to use if you wake up at night. Do not try too hard to sleep; instead, concentrate on the pleasant feeling of relaxation.
- Use stress management in the daytime.
- Avoid highly strenuous exercise for which you are not conditioned.
- An occasional sleeping pill is probably all right.



*(continued on page 3)*

## Antibiotics Overused *(continued from page 1)*

than 10% of tuberculosis patients have strains resistant to two of the most powerful TB drugs. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 14,000 people are infected and die in U.S. hospitals due to drug-resistant bacteria. Drug resistant bacteria account for up to 60% of hospital-acquired infections all over the world. Use of antibacterial soap will also ultimately contribute to increased drug resistance. According to the CDC, using regular soap and water is adequate protection.

If your provider does decide that antibiotics are appropriate for you, it is very important that you finish the full course of therapy prescribed. Even if you feel symptoms resolving, the full course is necessary to ensure that the infection is completely cleared. In addition, antibiotic-resistant bacteria are more likely to develop in cases where the infection is inadequately treated for too short a time period.

In conclusion, ask your primary care provider if an antibiotic is the right treatment for you. Proper antibiotic use is important in maintaining the effectiveness of life-saving antibiotics. ■

## January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month!

*Take this "Eye-Q" test to see how much you know about glaucoma.*

- T F** 1. Glaucoma tends to run in families.  
**T F** 2. A person can have glaucoma and not know it.  
**T F** 3. People over age 60 are more likely to get glaucoma.  
**T F** 4. Eye pain is often a symptom of glaucoma.  
**T F** 5. Vision loss from glaucoma can be restored.

*(answers on page 4)*

**Please join us for a series on**

## **HEALTHY AGING**

**1/15/2003**

**Coping with Caregiving**

**2/19/2003**

**Elder Abuse and Cultural Considerations**

**3/19/2003**

**Diabetes and the Older Adult**

All sessions will be held from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. at the Palo Alto Division: 3801 Miranda Avenue, Palo Alto, Building 101, 2nd Floor, Library Conference Room A2-120.

# Glaucoma and Its Treatments

Glaucoma is often referred to as the “sneak-thief of sight” because there are few early symptoms and it can cause damage before patients are even aware. Approximately half of those affected are not even aware of their diagnosis! This is why it is very important to have your eyes examined regularly.

Glaucoma tests measure “intraocular pressure” – or the pressure inside your eye. Elevated intraocular pressure is the most important risk factor for glaucoma but it is not the only factor in diagnosing the disease, as eye pressures can be misleading in some patients. Studies have shown that some people with “normal eyes” have elevated pressure while other people with glaucoma have below normal pressure. Also, some glaucoma patients can exhibit large fluctuations in pressure - higher-pressure readings occur in midmorning and the lowest recordings during sleep. In addition, eye pressures can be affected by other treatments or conditions. Eye pressure could seem normal if someone was taking a beta-blocking agent (a typical medicine for hypertension) or seem low if a patient had corneal surgery (refractive/laser surgery) that would affect the thickness of the cornea.

All medications used to treat glaucoma lower the intraocular pressure by one of three ways: (1) decreasing the overall production of fluid in your eye, (2) reducing the flow of fluid into your eye, (3) increasing the flow of fluid out of your eye. Each medication reduces intraocular pres-

## Glaucoma Facts

- Second most common cause of blindness in the world
- Affects 2.47 million people in the US
- Causes blindness in 1 million people in the US
- Most common form is “open angle” glaucoma
- Incidence increases with age
- More common, and the age of onset is younger, in those of African descent

sure to varying degrees and each drug has its own list of side effects. Your provider will try to use the smallest amount of medication that offers you the best results with the fewest side effects. Because the eye drops work in different ways, sometimes different agents are combined. It is important to remember that these medications must be taken on a daily, regular basis to control the pressure in your eye.

Research continues to improve established drugs and develop new and more effective ones. In addition, research efforts are focused on discovering which combinations of these drugs can be beneficial. With the advent of research into central nervous system diseases such as Parkinsons and Alzheimers, researchers are also looking at the topic of nerve protection or “neuroprotection.” Since glaucoma damages the optic nerve these studies may help us learn about ways to protect the optic nerve. ■

## Sleep *(continued from page 2)*

*To avoid interference of chemical substances on your ability to sleep:*

- Do not smoke to get yourself back to sleep.
- Do not smoke after 7:00 pm.
- Avoid caffeine entirely. Caffeine consumed in morning may still be at detectable levels in blood stream at bedtime.
- Use only light to moderate amount of alcoholic beverages. Alcohol can fragment sleep over the second half of your sleep period.
- Do not eat or drink *heavily* within 3 hours prior to bedtime. A light bedtime snack may help.

*To create a sound sleeping environment:*

- Keep your room dark, quiet, well-ventilated, and at a comfortable temperature throughout the night. Ear plugs and eye shades may be helpful.
- Keep the clock face turned away from you. If you wake up in the middle of the night, do not check the time.

Visit our new patient education website at

<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

You will find many great resources including:

- Information on patient education classes at the VA
- Information about The Personal Health Journal
- Helpful website links to connect you to your health
- Our quarterly patient newsletter, *To Your Health*
- ...and more!

- If you have trouble with regurgitation, be especially careful to avoid heavy meals and spices in the evening. Do not retire too hungry or too full. May need to raise head of bed.
- Avoid unfamiliar sleep environments.
- Be sure your mattress is not too soft or too firm and that your pillow is the right height and firmness.
- Use bedroom only for sleep. Do not work or watch TV before going to bed. ■

## VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

### VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94304  
(650) 493-5000

### VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road  
Livermore, CA 94550  
(650) 493-5000

### VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
(650) 493-5000

### VA CAPITOLA OPC

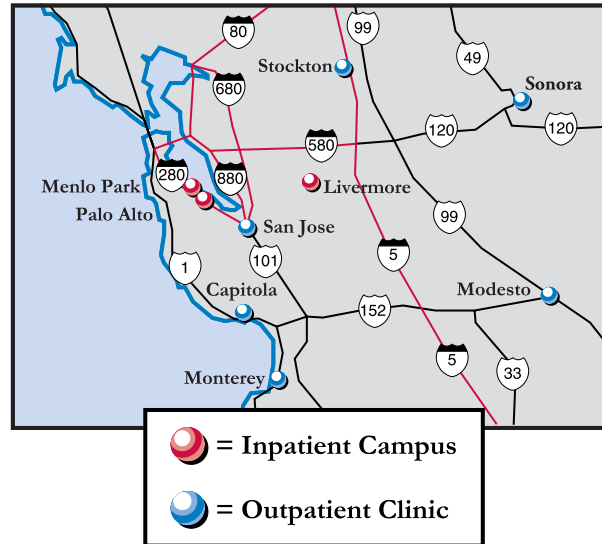
1350 N. 41st Street,  
Suite 102  
Capitola, CA 95010  
(831) 464-5519

### VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,  
Suite 315  
Modesto, CA 95350  
(209) 557-6200

### VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane  
Seaside, CA 93955  
(831) 883-3800



### VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard  
San Jose, CA 95119  
(408) 363-3011

### VA SONORA OPC

720 Pauline Court,  
Building S  
Sonoma, CA 95370  
(209) 533-5470

### VA STOCKTON OPC

500 W. Hospital Road  
Stockton, CA 95231  
(209) 946-3400

**World Wide Web Address:**  
[www.palo-alto.med.va.gov](http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov)



## Hepatitis C Support Group

at VA Palo Alto, Menlo Park,  
or Monterey, contact  
**Barbara Cunningham, RN, at**  
**650-493-5000, ext 60281.**

### Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in "To Your Health" feel free to send in your request via postal mail or e-mail to:

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**To Your Health** is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

#### Editorial Board:

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Rosemary Gill, RN, MS  
Sora Youn, PharmD  
Kris Morrow

## Answers to Glaucoma Eye-Q Test

(from page 2)

- 1. True.** Although glaucoma tends to run in families, a hereditary basis has not been established. If someone in your immediate family has glaucoma, you should have your eyes examined through dilated pupils at least every two years.
- 2. True.** The early stages of open-angle glaucoma usually have no warning signs. However, as the disease progresses, a person with glaucoma may notice his or her side vision gradually failing.
- 3. True.** Everyone over age 60 has an increased risk for glaucoma. Other groups at increased risk include African-Americans over age 40 and people with a family history of the disease.
- 4. False.** People with glaucoma usually do not experience pain from the disease.
- 5. False.** Vision loss from glaucoma is permanent. However, with early detection and treatment, the progression of visual loss can be slowed, or halted, and the risk of blindness reduced.

*National Eye Health Education Program  
National Eye Institute*